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Do Mega Sport-Events Legitimize Non-Democratic Regimes?

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Abstract

Hosting a mega sport event is an endeavour of enormous cost. With past literature having shown that these events are economically not beneficial. Mega sport events such as the Olympic Games or the FIFA Football World Cup are underlying a trend of being hosted by non-democratic countries. Political leaders use the virtue of these events to please the population in order to legitimize their rule. This work examines the impact of mega sport events on the likelihood of the incumbency of a country's political leader within a worldwide sample since the 1960s.

Keywords: mega sport events, democracy, legitimacy, incumbency.

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1. Introduction

In the 20th century mega sport events were normally awarded to western and industrialized countries with exemptions for the Olympic Games (Mexico 68, Seoul 88, Sarajevo 84) and the FIFA Football World Cup (South America). While the Olympic Games mark the arrival into a developed, economic and industrial elite, the World Cups were awarded due to the tradition of football in Latin America.

With the turn of the century the bids for mega sport events included more and more developing nations. For instance, the bids for the Summer Olympics 2004 and 2008 included Cape Town, Buenos Aires, Istanbul and Beijing. In 2010 the FIFA Football World cup was hosted by South Africa, the first time for an African nation.

Mega sport events such as the Olympic Games or the FIFA Football World Cup draw worldwide attention. They are not only a venue of important sport competitions, but also the showcase of the host city or nation. The countries are able to present their political and economic power alongside with cultural and historical achievements to the world.

Since the costs for hosting such events are rising to enormous levels, only a few countries are left for a possible selection. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) and FIFA require modern and costly sport facilities with certain standards for a successful bid. Nowadays, in the wake of terrorism, the costs for ensuring security contribute a huge part of these climbing costs.

According to the work of Kasimati (2003), who summarized the prevailing findings of the economic impacts, mega sport events are not beneficial. The cost-benefit analysis in the existing literature is separated into an ex ante and an ex post view. The ex ante view supports event boosters and agents who share the opinion that mega sport events are economically beneficial, while the ex post view is supported by independent academic researches. Ex ante

reports praise favourable long term effects like new sport facilities, infrastructure, tourism, public welfare, employment and business opportunities. Ex post approaches cannot confirm the results of the ex ante analysis. Matheson (2006) also shows that mega sport events have an insignificant net impact on economic key variables. Organisers of mega sport events have an enormous incentive to prove a positive impact of mega sport events. These seemingly promising reports are obviously afflicted by lobbying. Moreover, the costly sport facilities no longer get used after the event. For the FIFA World Cup 2014 in Brazil modern stadiums were built in Brasilia ($900m) and Manaus ($325m), the first currently being used as a bus depot and the other only occasionally used for football (no interest in football in the Amazonas region), concerts and religious meetings (BBC 2015, Berliner Zeitung 2015). These findings suggest alternative explanations, to why countries are eager to host mega sport events.

A common trend is beginning to be observable where mega sport events are going to be hosted more and more by different types of countries, which are historically not in the centre of global power. Most present are the names of China, Russia, Qatar and Azerbaijan. Beijing hosted the Summer Olympics in 2008, Sochi hosted the Winter Olympics in 2014, Russia will host the FIFA Football World Cup in 2018 and either Sochi or Kazan will host the European Games in 2019, which were hosted 2015 for their first edition in Baku. Finally, Qatar will host the FIFA Football World Cup in 2022.

According to the Freedom in the World 2016 Report of Freedom House all of the locations before mentioned are considered “not free”. The report covers detailed insights on political rights as well as civil liberties.

Nevertheless the election for the FIFA Football World Cup follows a rotational principle for the continents, both Russia and Qatar won against their “free” competitors (2018: Belgium

& Netherlands, England, Portugal & Spain; 2022: Australia, Japan, South Korea, United States).

Similar developments can be seen for example in the Formula 1. Eight out of twenty-one races in the 2016 Championship are taking place in “not-free” or only ”partly-free” countries (Azerbaijan, Bahrain, China, Russia, United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Malaysia, Mexico).

The past provides some examples of autocratic systems hosting mega sport events. Starting with the Berlin Summer Olympic Games in 1936 during the Hitler regime. The 1978 FIFA Football World Cup in Argentina is another example of a mega sport event being hosted in a country with a military regime.

Furthermore, Hamburg, as a city in a “free” country, rejected in a public referendum a bid for the 2024 Summer Olympic Games. In recent times this is the second rejection by a public referendum in Germany after Munich asked its citizens for a possible bid for the 2022 Winter Olympic Games (The New York Times 2015).

This development motivates for a closer look on other side factors entailed by mega sport events.

The hosting of a mega sport event is closely related to other political dominated influences, which go as far back as the romans. The famous slogan “*panem et circenses*” is known as an intention of the prevailing ruler to satisfy the population. The gladiatorial games shared the same purposes as the mega sport events of today. They carry many other factors other than solely entertainment or competition purposes.

The political leaders of these countries take advantage of the mega sport events. Through their immense symbolic virtue and their influence on the national beliefs of a country the political leaders have the possibility to gratify the population. They aim to utilize the mega

sport events not only to gain worldwide attention, but also to maintain the acceptance of their rule.

Manheim (1990) suggests that mega sport events have all had symbolic messages all along. It is a suitable environment to pursuit symbolic politics. Black (2008) finds two symbolic messages carried by such events. A mega sport event can be the cornerstone on the way to ground breaking changes. Secondly they provide the chance to reshape the common thoughts about the host. Hence, the marketing actions spill over to symbolism.

In addition, it is possible to create a national belief. Patriotism is connected with success in sports (Brady 2009). Success in sports is able to create a strong bond within the country. People are likely to build up pride and identify themselves with the athletes' achievements. Most present is this during FIFA Football World Cups, when people wear their countries jersey and fly their country's flag.

But there are not only internal effects to a country, since Olympic Games or FIFA Football World Cups draw a worldwide attention. Hosting the Olympic Games is especially seen as a national achievement by the society of the host nation. It is a possibility for a nation to put their economic success and cultural riches in the spotlight of the world. This as well enhances the pride of a nation.

The worldwide interest is a chance for host nations to reshape thoughts about their country and create a new image for themselves. According to Brady (2009), the Beijing 2008 Games had the strategic objective of promoting a new image to the rest of the world. The plan was to change the view from the present stereotype to the one of a modern civilization. Additionally, the goals of the reshaped image contain the combination of the existing concerns about China's growing political, military and economic power with the creation of cognizance for the rising strength and prosperity.

As found by Brady (2009) the Beijing 2008 Olympic Summer Games were designed to serve two main purposes. To improve China's international image and to sustain the support of the Government. Two ways of legitimation can be identified: A performance based and a persuasion based legitimacy. The performance based legitimation builds up on a strong economic performance. If a country has a strong economic sector, a large part of the population is able to benefit from it, as it creates income and employment. Both are relevant and influential factors that voters take into account. On the other hand, stands the convincing of the population to find popular consent for their rule. Both can work together to distract the citizens from serious problems the respective country is actually suffering from. In the case of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games these are more specifically: inflation, unemployment, political corruption and environmental degradation.

In the past several dictators took advantage of the popularity of football to sustain their regimes. Benito Mussolini, Francisco Franco and Saddam Hussein used football as a vehicle to ensure prestige, a positive worldwide image and to control the society (Worldsoccertalk 2012).

That is why the intentions of the political leaders of a host country are not negligible. They can use the special significance of these events to mobilize support for their government. With all the reasons mentioned above it seems like a unique situation to legitimize the prevailing government. Legitimacy is the basic condition of rule which is not only limited to democratic regimes but also understood as popular acceptance of a government or a ruler.

Therefore, mega events can be transformed into a powerful catalyst for legitimacy. Combined with the development of non-democratic countries taking over a huge part of the recent and future sport mega events, this leads to the question if sport mega events can legitimize autocratic regimes?

In this work I use a logit model for panel data with fixed effects in order to see if the probability of a change in the rule of a country differs when it is hosting a mega sport event. I will use two different approaches: The baseline approach uses Summer, Winter Olympic Games and the FIFA Football World Cups as events. An expanded approach is added by Rugby and Crickets World Cups.

This work is organised as follows. The following section describes the methodology. The third section provides the empirical results. The work ends with a conclusion and further thoughts.

2. Methodology

For the empirical approach I use a latent model, more precisely a logit model for panel data with fixed effects, to find out the impacts on the likelihood of a change in the rule in a country. The baseline sample contains 192 countries and the period reaches from 1960 to 2014. The baseline model consists of six variables. The dependent variable (*change*) is binary and comprises a change in the rule of a country. We look at a single person representing the ruler of a country (World Statesmen, Rulers 2016). This can be a prime minister, a president, a military ruler or a dictator. It is a dummy variable, where it is 1 if there is a change of rule in the respective country in the observing year and it is 0 if otherwise. A change results from either public election, appointment, coup d'état, death or the line of succession. In total, there have been 1324 changes in a country's rule. Looking at the average changes of rule it is worth mentioning that in "Free" countries, there is an average of 10.15 changes per country and in "Not Free" countries there is an average of 4.87 changes per country. This supports the hypothesis, that in autocratic regimes, changes of rule are not that frequent, with rulers being more likely to remain in power before, during and after the event has taken place. At the time

of the event attribution there is little knowledge about what future *change*[1] is likely to be, especially because most are democratic.

For some countries the change variable is not easy to create, since the political system may change over the years. Likewise, some countries have a group of rulers (Switzerland, Bosnia and Herzegovina) or a semi-presidential system, which does not allow a clear distinction of a single political head. Therefore, the variable has been left out for some countries. Nevertheless, there are remaining values for 153 countries.

Further I include a polity score (*polity2*) as a control variable, which has been drawn from the Polity IV project. The data series include scores for democracies and autocracies. Both the democracy and autocracy scores range from 0 to 10, with 10 is being the most distinct and 0 the least distinct. The polity2 scores are the difference between the democracy score and the autocracy score. In contrast to the polity score, the polity2 score eliminates extreme values, which are awarded for foreign interruption, anarchy or a transition period. I expect a positive relationship between *change* and *polity2*, since autocratic rulers normally are likely to rule for a longer time. Possible reasons are non-democratic election systems, electoral fraud and bribery. The above findings on the average changes support this view.

Three control variables from the World Bank Data are also used: General Government Final Consumption Expenditure *(gov_exp*), Inflation (*inf*) and Real GDP Per Capita Growth (r*gdppcgrowth*[2]). They are included in the model because citizens vote in favour of the prevailing rule, if the economy is doing well (*good times*) and against (*bad times*) if otherwise (Kramer 1983, Markus 1988, Alesina, Cohen and Roubini, 1991, Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier

[1] The average lag between attribution and the actual event is 6.38 years

[2] First, the real GDP per Capita is calculated by dividing the GDP per capita(current dollar) by the GDP deflator. Second the respective growth rate is calculated by dividing the actual year by the previous year and the result minus one

2000). The studies of economic determinants influencing voting behaviour go back to the work of Key (1964). They should take into account the relevant factors that influence the incumbency of a ruler. All three are important criteria for citizens of a country, which affect the voting behaviour. The unemployment rate is one of the factors, but is not included due to a lack of data in the observed period. In a more specific study focusing on a regional level it definitely would have to be included. For *gov_exp* and *inf* I expect a positive relationship, because high government expenditure and inflation cause *bad times* and citizens are not likely to support the prevailing ruler. Whereas a positive r*gdppcgrowth* depict *good times* and therefore citizens are likely to continue supporting the present ruler. Consequently we expect a negative relationship.

As mega sport events I chose the Summer Olympic Games, the Winter Olympic Games and the FIFA Football World Cups, which I use for a baseline approach. Moreover, in an expanded approach I will also include the Rugby and the Cricket World Cups even if they do not have the same popularity as the others. But since they have an immense value for various countries of the southern hemisphere, such as South Africa, they are worth to be within the sample. In our period there is a total of forty-three events (sixty in the expanded approach): fourteen Summer Olympic Games, fifteen Winter Olympic Games and fourteen Football World Cups. For the expanded approach, I have added seven Rugby World Cups and ten Cricket World Cups. The events took place in twenty-one different countries, for the expanded sample respectively in thirty-seven countries. In the baseline model, the United States are leading, being a host six times followed by Japan, who hosted four times. In the expanded model the leader is the United Kingdom hosting eight[3] events, followed by the United States and France with six and five events hosted. All events are taking place every four years, only the Winter Olympic Games in 1994 were hosted only two years after the previous edition in order to change the

[3] In the data set there are only seven events depicted, since in 1999 the Rugby and the Cricket World Cup were both hosted by the United Kingdom

rhythm from the Summer Olympic Games. I use a dummy variable (*events*), which is 1, if one of the three events is taking place in the considered year. If an event is hosted by a partnership of countries, a 1 is awarded for every single co-host. Continental competitions such as the UEFA European Championship or the European Games simply do not have the global attention as the others and their popularity is limited to the respective region or continent. Thus, they are not included in this work. Nevertheless, there are other mega sport events that attract a lot of attention and have the colossal symbolic importance. However, since events like the Super Bowl or the Champions League Final are hosted on a yearly basis, I do not include them.

The baseline model is depicted in equation (1):

$$change = polity2 + gov\_exp + inf + rgdppcgrowth + events \quad (1)$$

The baseline approach is added up by including the lags of the event dummy instead of the contemporaneous *events* variable. *events1***,** *events2* and *events3* will be 1 if an event was hosted one year, two years and three years ago. The lags are important since the mega sport events and the elections obviously need not to take place in the same year. I will include the lags separately and jointly (Equation (2)-(5)):

$$change = polity2 + gov\_exp + inf + rgdppcgrowth + events1 \quad (2)$$

$$change = polity2 + gov\_exp + inf + rgdppcgrowth + events2 \quad (3)$$

$$change = polity2 + gov\_exp + inf + rgdppcgrowth + events3 \quad (4)$$

$$change = polity2 + gov\_exp + inf + rgdppcgrowth + events1 + events2 + events3 \quad (5)$$

For all the event variables we expect the relationship with *change* to negative, at least for the early lags. This specific relation is the main issue I want to examine: Hosting a mega sport event should reduce the likelihood of a change in rule.

The expanded approach has the same built-up as the baseline. In order to signal the inclusion of the Rugby and the Cricket World Cups, I change the events variable to *events_rc*, respectively *events_rc1*, *events_rc2* and *events_rc3*. The complete expanded approach is depicted in equations (8)-(9):

$$change = polity2 + gov\_exp + inf + rgdppcgrowth + events\_rc \quad (6)$$

$$change = polity2 + gov\_exp + inf + rgdppcgrowth + events\_rc1 \quad (7)$$

$$change = polity2 + gov\_exp + inf + rgdppcgrowth + events\_rc2 \quad (8)$$

$$change = polity2 + gov\_exp + inf + rgdppcgrowth + events\_rc3 \quad (9)$$

$$change = polity2 + gov\_exp + inf + rgdppcgrowth + events\_rc1 + events\_rc2 + events\_rc3 \quad (10)$$

By studying the expanded model we get a broader sample. The hosts of the Rugby and the Cricket World Cups are shared with a larger part of developing countries. I expect the effects to be enhanced compared to the baseline approach.

A summary of all used variables is presented in the following *Table (1)*.

In the next section I will present the empirical results of the two approaches presented above.

Table (1)

	count	mean	sd	min	max
id	7355	94.57199	55.40098	1	192
year	7355	1991.646	14.6027	1962	2014
change	6246	.176593	.3813544	0	1
polity2	6333	1.836886	7.283824	-10	10
gov_exp	6697	16.03099	6.598922	0	69.5428
inf	5773	13.87126	71.81702	-18.1086	2154.44
rgdppcgrowth	7355	.0983234	1.755314	-9.84882	9.99788
events	7355	.0051666	.0716977	0	1
events1	7355	.0050306	.0707528	0	1
events2	7355	.0054385	.0735502	0	1
events3	7355	.0053025	.07263	0	1
events_rc	7355	.0097893	.0984619	0	1
events_rc1	7355	.0095173	.0970981	0	1
events_rc2	7355	.0096533	.0977825	0	1
events_rc3	7355	.0097893	.0984619	0	1

3. Empirical Results

In this section I present the empirical results of the two approaches presented in the previous section. In order to detect the exact influence of the variables on the likelihoods of a change, we need to look at the marginal effects[4]. The marginal effects of the baseline approach are shown in *Table (2)* whereas the results of the expanded approach are in *Table (3).* The corresponding p-values are represented in brackets.

In both approaches the significant control variables are *gov_exp* and *inf*. *gov_exp* is significant in all models (1) to (10) at a 1% significance level. Nevertheless, the size of the impact is less than 1% for all: An increase in *gov_exp* increases the likelihood of a change within the range of 0.677% and 0.684%. *inf* is significant in all models (1) to (10) at a 10% significance level. The size of the impact is for all models less than 1%. They reach from 0.0259% to 0.0261%. Both, *gov_exp* and *inf*, confirm my expectation of a positive influence on

[4] The preliminary regression results can be found in the appendix

a change in rule. *polity2* and *rgdppcgrowth* are not significant in all models, but *polity2* confirms at least the expected positive direction.

Table (2)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
polity2	0.00355	0.00357	0.00357	0.00356	0.00359
	(0.163)	(0.160)	(0.161)	(0.161)	(0.158)
gov_exp	0.00677***	0.00681***	0.00678***	0.00679***	0.00683***
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
inf	0.000261*	0.000260*	0.000260*	0.000259*	0.000260*
	(0.060)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.062)	(0.061)
rgdppcgrowth	0.00355	0.00336	0.00354	0.00354	0.00338
	(0.560)	(0.581)	(0.561)	(0.561)	(0.579)
events	0.0721				
	(0.475)				
events1		-0.255*			-0.259*
		(0.080)			(0.077)
events2			-0.0325		-0.0469
			(0.758)		(0.657)
events3				-0.0376	-0.0434
				(0.720)	(0.682)
N	4113	4113	4113	4113	4113

p-values in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

An immediate impact, as it is depicted in model (1) and model (6), with the variables *events* and *events_rc*, is not of significant influence. Therefore, in model (2) and model (5) *events1* is significant at a 10% level, with respective p-values of 0.08 and 0.077. The marginal effects depict a striking 25.5% and 25.9% decrease in the likelihood of a change in the leadership, if the corresponding country is hosting a mega sport event in the previous year.

These findings are confirmed by the expanded approach in model (7) and (10). The significance increases slightly. The respective p-values are 0.055 and 0.054 respectively. But the size of the impacts shrink slightly to 21.7% and 21.8%.

Table (3)

	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
polity2	0.00355	0.00360	0.00357	0.00355	0.00361
	(0.163)	(0.157)	(0.161)	(0.163)	(0.157)
gov_exp	0.00677***	0.00683***	0.00679***	0.00677***	0.00684***
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
inf	0.000260*	0.000260*	0.000260*	0.000260*	0.000260*
	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.061)
rgdppcgrowth	0.00353	0.00338	0.00354	0.00352	0.00337
	(0.562)	(0.579)	(0.561)	(0.563)	(0.579)
events_rc	0.0289				
	(0.728)				
events_rc1		-0.217*			-0.218*
		(0.055)			(0.054)
events_rc2			-0.0306		-0.0390
			(0.723)		(0.652)
events_rc3				0.0230	0.0153
				(0.776)	(0.851)
N	4113	4113	4113	4113	4113

p-values in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Additionally, an interesting observation is that the effect of a mega sport event is blurring out. For both the baseline and the expanded approaches, the significance disappears. Furthermore, in the expanded approach *events_rc3* in model (9) and (10), the sign changes to positive, signalling a loss of the mega sport event' influence on the incumbency of a country's ruler.

To check the robustness of the results I undertook several other approaches with different model specifications. In accordance with the panel logit all confirmed the significant negative influence of the one year lagged events variables. Then again, the significance of the

control variables differs slightly within the models. *Table (4)* and *table (5)* showing the comparison to a logit approach with random effects and a probit with random effects.

Table (4)

	Logit, fixed effects	Logit, random effects	Probit, random effects
polity2	0.00357	0.00747***	0.00753***
	(0.160)	(0.000)	(0.000)
gov_exp	0.00681***	0.00153	0.00148
	(0.009)	(0.257)	(0.278)
inf	0.000260*	0.000128*	0.000136*
	(0.061)	(0.077)	(0.090)
rgdppcgrowth	0.00336	0.00340	0.00327
	(0.581)	(0.346)	(0.367)
events1	-0.255*	-0.154*	-0.139*
	(0.080)	(0.081)	(0.078)
N	4113	4269	4269

p-values in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table (5)

	Logit, fixed effects	Logit, random effects	Probit, random effects
polity2	0.00360	0.00752***	0.00757***
	(0.157)	(0.000)	(0.000)
gov_exp	0.00683***	0.00153	0.00148
	(0.009)	(0.256)	(0.277)
inf	0.000260*	0.000128*	0.000135*
	(0.061)	(0.078)	(0.090)
rgdppcgrowth	0.00338	0.00341	0.00327
	(0.579)	(0.345)	(0.367)
events_rc1	-0.217*	-0.137**	-0.130**
	(0.055)	(0.044)	(0.038)
N	4113	4269	4269

p-values in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Difficulties arise when measuring the goodness of fit in binary nonlinear response models. Since logit and probit models have different likelihoods, they cannot be compared to

each other. Random models should not make perfect predictions, because a perfect fit would not allow any random effects.

Table (6) is presenting another summary. The variables are presented dependent on the presence of an event. The average change is confirming our previous results. It is in both cases smaller than in the non-host countries. As most of the countries which are hosting an event are developed and democratic the polity2 score average is much higher in the host countries. The fact, that inflation is lower in developed countries is depicted in this table as well. This table is added by real GDP per capita. It is also proving its expectations. Real GDP per capita is higher in developed countries, than in developing. These are good facts which support the results from the empirical approaches.

Table (6)

	events1=1		events1=0		events_rc1=1		events_rc1=0	
	count	mean	count	mean	count	mean	count	mean
change	37	.0810811	6209	.1771622	65	.1230769	6181	.1771558
polity2	37	7.837838	6296	1.80162	65	7.984615	6268	1.773133
gov_exp	37	16.35779	6660	16.02917	69	16.48411	6628	16.02627
inf	32	8.409156	5741	13.90171	61	7.662621	5712	13.93757
rgdppcgrowth	37	-.007977	7318	.0988609	70	-.029705	7285	.0995536
real_gdp_pc	37	7155.137	7313	2830.453	70	5649.075	7280	2825.331

Summarizing, the model predicts a significant positive influence of *gov_exp* and *inf* on the likelihood of a change. However, more important is the significant influence of the events variables *events1* and *events_rc1*. These findings support my hypothesis, that mega sport events have a supporting influence for the incumbency of a political leader, even though the influence is neither of immediate nor of permanent duration.

4. Conclusion

In this section, I provide concluding remarks and some further thoughts on the examined issue. As the results from the previous section show, there is significant influence from the government expenditure, inflation and the one year lagged events variables. All confirm the expectations in the sense of the direction of the influence. The polity2 score and the change in the rule share a positive relationship. The more democratic a country the more likely it is that there will be a change in the political leading role for every year. On the other hand, there is a negative influence on the likelihood of a change by the one year lagged event dummies detected. Especially, the significant negative impact of the one year lagged events variables are robust within various model specifications. If a country hosts a mega sport event in the previous year, the probability of a relay of the political head decreases. This could be because elections and the mega sport events might not have taken place at the same time of the year or not even in the same year. If the election is in the beginning of the year and the mega sport event is taking place in the middle or end of the year, the influence of the event on the peoples' decision is not that influential. If on the other hand, the election follows a mega event in the previous year, the citizens are likely to connect their memories with their voting behaviour. Consequently, mega sport events can be used to legitimize a country's leader's rule. An enhanced significance is perceptible if the baseline event dummies are widened to the expanded approach. Furthermore, these results were able to withstand a robustness check with other model specifications.

A further observation from the empirical results is the blurring out of the impact of the mega sport events. The size and significance shrink for the two and three year lagged events variables. In connection to Brady's hypothesis (2009), the Beijing 2008 Olympic Summer Games' main purpose served to sustain the support for the prevailing government by distracting the population. It is now possible to say that over time these distraction strategies lose their

impact. The people come back thinking and caring about their real problems and the factors that really matter to them.

Thus, mega sport events have a significant impact in the subsequent time. But on the other hand it is not an impact of long lasting nature. Mega sport events could serve as a catalyst for short term success and help to guaranty incumbency in the near future. Consequently, mega sport events are mechanisms, which can be used by autocratic state leaders to please the population so as not to be challenged and sustain legitimacy for their rule.

This approach is not free of critique. In autocratic countries the political head is always more likely to stay in power than in democratic countries. Therefore, the country's ruler is presumably already in power when the event was attributed as well as during and after the event. In this connection, one should always be aware of bribery, electoral fraud and suppression of freedom of opinion in autocratic countries. Accordingly, autocratic regime leaders prefer to try to please the population and avoid public turmoil than winning the next "elections." Nevertheless, as presented in the introduction mega sport events can serve for these means.

Moreover, it is important to take into account that the Olympics and the FIFA Football World Cups take place on different regional levels. Whereas the Olympics only take place in one city and its closer surroundings, the FIFA Football World Cups take place in an entire country. Nevertheless, the worldwide attention for all three events are similar, but the effects on regional factors are likely to be more distinct with the Olympics.

A further critique point is connected to the motivation. It is difficult to find an interaction between the democracy level and the events, since the trend of mega sport events being hosted by autocratic countries is a recent occurrence. One has to be careful in drawing a connection between these two factors. In the past, most of the hosts were developed and

democratic states and only some were non democratic. In the baseline sample only six out of forty-three events were hosted in a country with a negative *polity2* score at the time of the event. For the expanded model seven out of sixty events were hosted in a country with a negative *polity2* score at the time of the event. However, if we look at the upcoming events until 2022 using the baseline approach, there are three out of six events, that take place in ,as considered in 2016, "not-free" countries. Thus, it is worth following the approach of this work in the future.

My approach is also limited in the sense that I only look at a single person, who concentrates the political power of a country. The motivation arises because in autocratic countries we have a one-person ruler. Obviously, this is not the case all over the world. To improve a worldwide sample, a way has to be found to take into account systems in which the power is parted. In addition, looking at the political attitude of a system's leader and its changing linked to hosting mega sport events could be a further interesting issue to study.

The results of this work combined with the trend to non-democratic hosts are still critical. Organising committees such as the IOC or FIFA must find ways to make the event attribution more general and not limited to a handful of countries. A couple of cornerstone changes are necessary (The Economist 2015): Sponsors and athletes have to work together to force the organising committees to restructure their entities. The latest scandals of FIFA and the IOC show similarities to autocratic regimes regarding briberies and corruption. First, these organisations have to become democratic by themselves and clean up their businesses. A democratic and open entity is essential to progress and allow more diverse countries to host events. As mentioned in the beginning, the costs for mega sport events are exploding to gigantic heights, since the organising committees require modern sport facilities and only some countries have the resources to fund them. Thus, some countries vote against applying to host mega sport events, because it is unclear how these facilities will be used after the event. They fear enormous spending on facilities which will likely never be used again. Autocratic regimes

could look for prestige with highly modern stadiums as status symbols. It is advisable that the organising committees rethink their requirements for hosting their events, as they are prohibitive to other countries. On the other hand, it may be worth to consider requirements for countries to hold free elections, maintain human rights, freedom of press and opinion, in order to apply for these events.

A further example of the power of sports on politics is the public funding of a new arena for the NHL franchise Detroit Red Wings (The Guardian 2014). The $450m arena should be mainly funded by the bankrupt city. The project also contains a redevelopment of the arena's surrounding area, which rises the total cost to $650m, whereby Detroit should contribute $284.5m. The absurdity of the situation is the wealth of the Red Wings owner (Mike Ilitch), estimated at an enormous $2.7bn, which greatly contrasts the city's wealth, officially bankrupt since December 2013 with liabilities of nearly $18.5bn.

Sports is a social phenomenon. Every week millions of people follow the matches of professional athletes and teams. This ever growing fascination creates interest from all kinds of different agents. The worldwide stage and attention of a mega sport event allow sponsors as well as countries and their political elite to be in the spotlight. The agents use this platform to pursue symbolic goals. Following the roman metonymy "*panem et circenses*" the political leaders seek prestige and to control society by distracting entertainment. Apparently, trying to guarantee legitimacy justifies non rational spending by the countries' rulers.

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